

REMARKS

Claims 15 and 17-28 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 15, 18-20 and 22-28 are amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 16, and cancels claim 16 without prejudice to, or disclaimer of, the subject matter of claim 16. No new matter is added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

In reply to the December 29, 2009 Restriction Requirement, Applicants provisionally elect Group II, claims 20-24, with traverse.

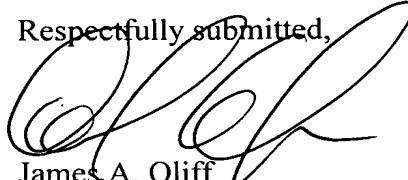
It is also respectfully submitted that the subject matter of all claims is sufficiently related that a thorough search for the subject matter of any one Group of claims would encompass a search for the subject matter of the remaining claims. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the search and examination of the entire application could be made without serious burden. See MPEP §803 in which it is stated that "if the search and examination of an entire application can be made without serious burden, the examiner must examine it on the merits, even though it includes claims to independent or distinct inventions" (emphasis added). As such, the subject matter of all three groups of claims does relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1. It is respectfully submitted that this policy should apply in the present application in order to avoid unnecessary delay and expense to Applicants and duplicative examination by the Patent Office.

Moreover, claims 15, 20 and 25 are amended to include the same special technical feature that defines over the prior art. This inclusion of this technical feature in claims in the corresponding European application resulted in grant by the European Patent Office.

Thus, reconsideration and withdrawal of the Restriction Requirement are respectfully requested.

Favorable consideration and prompt allowance of claims 15 and 17-28 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

James A. Oliff
Registration No. 27,075

Daniel A. Tanner, III
Registration No. 54,734

JAO:KXH/emd

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OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 320850
Alexandria, Virginia 22320-4850
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

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